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ABSTRACT

To address the expanding need for child care workers and the increase in older adults requesting job training, Generations Together (GT) developed two year-long projects to implement child care training for older adults at community colleges nationwide. The first project involved replicating a GT-developed child care curriculum and training/placement model for older adults at six community colleges nationwide in 1990, while the second implemented the model at five community colleges and one small liberal arts college in Pennsylvania in 1991. Project results and factors that contributed to successful training efforts were identified through questionnaires distributed to the older adult trainees at the beginning and end of the 12 training programs, follow-up surveys of graduates' employment status, and interviews conducted with the community college training teams during site visits or end-of-project meetings. Highlighted results included the following: (1) 45% of the national project graduates were working in paid jobs at an average of 24 hours per week at $5.84 per hour, while 55% of the Pennsylvania project graduates were working in paid jobs at an average of 21 hours per week at $4.58 per hour; (2) 94% of the 1990 trainees and 100% of 1991 trainees felt the training had met their expectations; and (3) the most important aspects for program success were the use of a well-developed program model with an appropriate curriculum, the provision of practicum experience, systematic placement and follow-up procedures, and strong commitment to the project and the individual trainees' needs. (MAB)

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"Factors in Successful Community College Older Worker Child Care Training Programs"

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INTRODUCTION

Community colleges have shown themselves to be well-suited to training older adults and, in particular, to training older adults for employment in child care. This paper discusses factors that contribute to successful community college older adult child care training efforts.[1]

The paper is based on two recent Generations Together projects, one nationwide and one in Pennsylvania, that involved a dozen community colleges, both urban and suburban. Data comes from questionnaires administered to the older adult trainees at the beginning and the end of the 12 training programs, follow-up surveys of graduates' employment status, and interviews with the community college training teams during site visits or at end-of-project meetings.

Successful training programs are defined as those with completion of a full training and placement cycle, high levels of older adult satisfaction with the training, and good placement rates. In addition, several community colleges had particularly successful training efforts which produced higher-than-average wages for older adult graduates, excellent retention of graduates over the first six months following training, and commitment by the colleges to continue the training.

Factors that contributed to successful programs included the use of a well-developed program model and the adoption of an appropriate curriculum. For the two particularly successful efforts, factors included regional economic conditions, the timing of the courses, and the strength of the colleges' linkages to child care and aging agencies.

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[1] In addition to carrying out the training programs described in this paper, Generations Together staff members Cheryl Mack, Sally Newman, and Thomas Smith have, over the last several years, contributed many ideas about what makes for successful programs.

BACKGROUND

As more and more women have entered the work force in the last decade, Americans have increasingly demanded quality child care. Paralleling this expanding need for child care has been a growing shortage of child care workers due, in part, to the shrinking pool of younger workers who have traditionally filled most entry-level child care jobs.

A potential source for child care workers is the growing number of Americans over 55, a group now numbering over 30 million and increasing rapidly (Collins, 1987). However, early childhood education professionals believe that to properly prepare these older adults for child care employment requires training programs that teach uniform, transferable skills (Newman, VanderVen, Ward, 1991). This view is compatible with educators' increasing recognition that many older adults are returning to higher education specifically interested in gaining new job skills (Apps, 1988).

Community colleges are well-suited for conducting standardized child care training programs for older adults. They offer not only high quality teaching, but also recruitment, placement, and follow-up capabilities that lead to older worker job satisfaction and retention. Community colleges recognize that training programs have to be adjusted for diversity and for a variety of educational levels, points made in a recent Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching study on education for adult workers (Eurich, 1990). As an added benefit, community colleges frequently offer child development programs to which training program graduates can return to take additional courses as they advance in their child care careers.

Community colleges' flexibility and openness to both younger and older students make them well-suited for nation-wide expansion of older worker child care training. They have been closely involved with human resource and local economic development during the 1980s and have extensive experience in

partnerships with outside firms and agencies (Long, 1989). They are accustomed to operating in an environment where a wide range of for-profit and non-profit groups offer training, and where collaboration works to the benefit of both collegiate and non-collegiate partners (Hodgkinson, 1983).

DEVELOPMENT OF A CHILD CARE TRAINING MODEL

Generations Together's work in intergenerational child care began in 1982 with a foundation grant to develop models for involving older volunteers in child care. Subsequent efforts included developing state-wide collaboration between Pennsylvania's aging and child care networks and creating a child care program staffed entirely by older adults. In the mid-1980s, Generations Together began training low-income older adults for child care employment under the federal Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) and placing them into child care centers in the Pittsburgh area. This JTPA-funded training has continued, with current projects focusing on neighborhood-based child care training and on helping small communities develop their own JTPA training.

These programs showed that child care providers, children, and parents valued older adults' experiences and skills, and that child care agencies willingly hired older workers. At the same time, the older learners had special characteristics which trainers needed to take into account. In response, Generations Together developed its own older worker child care training curriculum. However, the JTPA experience also showed that effective training programs included not only classroom instruction and a practicum experience, but well-designed recruitment, screening, placement, and follow-up procedures. Therefore, Generations Together built the curriculum into a comprehensive training and placement model.

1990 NATIONAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE PROJECT

With the shortage of child care workers, as well as an increasing number of older adults requesting job training, Generations Together saw that community colleges were an ideal vehicle to expand its training, particularly to include those middle-income persons not eligible for programs funded by JTPA. To begin this expansion, Generations Together, with funding from the Sears-Roebuck Foundation, carried out a year-long national replication project in 1990.

As the project's first step, Generations Together (GT) collaborated with the Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC) in Pittsburgh to adapt the existing Generations Together JTPA model to community colleges. In this initial cycle, a joint GT/CCAC project staff carried out the following steps:

- Contacted aging and child care organizations to work with college faculty and staff on a leadership team;
- Convened a community awareness meeting;
- Recruited, screened, and trained (including practicum) 15 older adults;
- Placed and followed the graduates as they began work;
- Convened a mini-conference that included local aging and child care leadership to recognize graduates and plan for the project's continuation.

Staff from community colleges in Detroit, the Orlando area, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Seattle followed the same general steps. Generations Together provided overall support and technical assistance that enabled each community college to implement their project. This included supplying the program model and curriculum, making site visits for initial meetings and for graduations or mini-conferences, conducting a mid-year meeting and workshop in Pittsburgh for the community college coordinators, and evaluating the project.

Because the six colleges and their partnering community agencies (child care centers and aging organizations such as Area

Agencies on Aging) were from different states, organizational procedures and regulations governing the future child care workers varied. Therefore, the colleges adapted Generations Together's older worker curriculum when necessary to include locally-mandated materials.

Moreover, a high degree of site autonomy helped create a variety of leadership styles, schedules, and approaches. In one site, for example, the community college did not directly manage the program, but made its facilities available to a local child care organization which did the training. Each site also determined how the program was to be administered and made all its own staffing decisions.

1991 PENNSYLVANIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE PROJECT

In 1991, Generations Together, with funding from the Retirement Research Foundation, conducted a second replication project at five community colleges and one small liberal arts college in Pennsylvania. In addition to training and placing older adults in child care using a model refined from the 1990 national project, the Pennsylvania project produced a video and a training program manual. The community colleges were in rural areas, small cities, or suburbs across the state: Lehigh County, Luzerne County, Montgomery County, Berks County, and Westmoreland County. A sixth site was Gannon University in Erie.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TRAINEES AND THE TRAINING

1990 National Project

In the 1990 project, the older adults who enrolled had these characteristics:

- 46% were 50 to 59 years old, 41% were 60 to 69, and 13% were over 70;
- 94% were female;
- 43% were African-American; 37% were Caucasian; 10% were Asian; and 8% were Hispanic;

- 57% were divorced, separated, or widowed; 37% were married; and 7% had never married;
- 37% were college graduates; only 6% had not finished high school;
- Over one-third (35%) were not native speakers of English;
- 67% reported an annual pre-tax household income of less than $15,000; however, 8% reported household income of over $36,000 annually.

1991 Pennsylvania Project

The 1991 Pennsylvania program's older adults had these characteristics:

- 57% were 50 to 59 years old; 35% were 60 to 69, and 6% were over 70;
- 97% were female;
- 75% were Caucasian; 16% were African-American; 5% were Native American; 3% were Hispanic; and 2% were Asian;
- 31% were divorced, separated, or widowed; 64% were married or living with a partner; and 6% had never married;
- 5% were college graduates and another 2% had done graduate work; 15% had not finished high school;
- 68% reported an annual pre-tax household income of less than $15,000; 5% reported household income of over $40,000 annually.

TRAINEE EMPLOYMENT

Placing graduates into paid child care employment was an important project objective for both the 1990 and 1991 projects.

1990 National Project

Generations Together surveyed the graduates from the six community college programs in November 1990. The interviews found:

- Forty-five percent of the graduates were working in paid child care jobs;

- Most had found employment as child care center aides; six were working as teachers or administrators and two as nannies;
- Those who were working were employed an average of 24 hours per week (25% working full-time) at a wage of $5.84 per hour.

The older adults who reported that they were not working in child care indicated that illness and family obligations such as caring for grandchildren or ill spouses were the primary reasons for not their being employed.

1991 Pennsylvania Project

At the end of the 1991 project, site coordinators interviewed, in-person or by telephone, the persons who had completed their training program 30 to 60 days following the end of training. The interviews found that:

- 39 of 71 older adults (55%) had found work in paid child care positions by the end of 1991;
- Most had found employment as child care center aides; five were working as assistant teachers, one as a teacher, and one as a director;
- The working were employed an average of 21 hours per week at a wage of $4.58 per hour.

Those older adults who were not working in child care following the completion of training gave a variety of reasons for their not working, including personal demands such as caring for grandchildren or traveling, obstacles such as health (injuries) and lack of transportation, lack of responses from job sites or not finding job openings, and opportunities to work at higher-paying (non-child care) jobs or to open home day care centers.

TRAINING PROJECT SUCCESS

Generations Together staff and their collaborating community college partners judged the 1990 and 1991 project efforts to be

successful. All sites implemented the training/placement model; several had lower than anticipated enrollments.

Older adult trainees reported high levels of satisfaction with the training:

- The training met the trainees' expectations -- 100% of the 1991 trainees and 94% of the 1990 trainees agreed or strongly agreed that the training meet their expectations;
- Of the 1991 trainees, 95% said they felt well-prepared to work in child care at the completion of training;
- The 1991 group of older adults said that the training program increased their openness to new ideas (95%), their interest in children's care (94%), their feelings of being needed (86%), and their knowledge and skills (81%).
- Seventy percent or more of the 1990 trainees indicated that the training increased their feelings of being valued, opened them to new ideas, heightened their interest in caring for children, and made them more flexible.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

The following factors contributed to these successful training efforts:

- All the colleges used a well-developed program model that included leadership team formation, recruitment, screening, training, placement, and follow-up activities. The model included carefully delineated roles and responsibilities and a timeline for implementation. For example, one role that contributed to successful programs was that of a consistent coordinator. In most colleges, this person was either a child development department faculty member or administrator, or a continuing education administrator with a high-level of interest and involvement in the older adult training. Another useful role was that of a person responsible for actively supporting the individual trainees throughout the program, particularly in colleges where the training was team taught.

- The use of an appropriate curriculum specifically designed for use by older adults that also taught up-to-date child development theory and practice contributed to success. Because child care regulations and practices differed from state to state, colleges had to be flexible in adapting the curriculum to local needs, particularly when specific subjects (ie, first aid) were either mandated by their state or teaching of particular skills would give trainees an advantage in the job market.
- A well-designed and supervised practicum experience contributed to student learning, gave older adults practical experience, served as the basis of much group discussion, and was a source of employment for some graduates.
- Commitment to the project from both the community colleges and local aging and child care networks was another factor. In successful efforts, a community team, including both college staff and persons from community agencies, was drawn from these networks, invested in the project, and called upon to give specific support.
- Systematic placement and follow-up procedures were integrated into successful training programs. High placement rates required clearly defined responsibilities and familiarity with local child care employers. Among the successful 1991 strategies used to raise placement were assigning the responsibility to a college staff member who supervised practicum placements (both for the older adult training and for other child development courses) and who had daily contact with area child care employers.
- Attention to trainees' affective needs and group bonding activities such as sufficient class time for group discussion and recognition events (ie, graduations, reunions) was an important part of program success.

FINDINGS ON GROUP BONDING, SCREENING, AND PRACTICUM

The 1991 evaluation confirmed the importance of several of these success factors. To determine why some older adults were not being placed, Generations Together ran a simple statistical analysis on the data from the 1991 questionnaires and follow-up interviews to find if there were any significant relationships between responses on the questionnaires and older adults' "placed" or "not placed" status as determined in the interviews.

For most responses, including demographic characteristics, perceptions of the training, and self reports on how the training affected the trainees, the analysis found no statistically significant relationships with being placed or not being placed. However, the analysis did find a significant relationship between:

- Making close friendships during the training and being placed;
- Having a large decrease in income in the last two years and not being placed;
- Reporting that physical activities were a problem during training and not being placed.

Generations Together staff frequently observed the bonding that occurred in the older worker training. Moreover, trainers and site coordinators reported that trainees remained in contact following graduation and told each other about job openings. The relationship between making close friendships and placement suggests that effective older adult training programs should be structured to promote group bonding.

One explanation for the large decreases in income reported by some trainees may be that some older adults moved from relatively well-paying jobs into retirement shortly before the training. These persons may have valued the training experience, but did not feel a pressing need to take a job following graduation. This suggests that training programs which wish to maximize placement might more closely probe applicants' work

intentions, particularly if they are recently retired.

Child care work is physically demanding; that persons reporting during training that physical activities were a problem had lower placement rates confirms a practicum's value in demonstrating to older adults and trainers problems that may arise later in the work place. Close monitoring of trainees can determine who may be experiencing physical problems that may unnecessarily discourage placement. Trainers can then make suggestions as to how to cope with physical difficulties at work or give guidance to job placements that are not as physically demanding.

THE MOST SUCCESSFUL SITES

All 12 sites successfully implemented a training and placement program. Overall, they produced high levels of older adult satisfaction and placed about half of the total graduates in paid child care positions. In addition, several 1990 college training efforts had high placement rates, higher-than-average wages for older adult graduates, excellent retention of graduates over the first six months following training, and commitment by the college to continue the training. Two of these cases merit closer examination for factors contributing to successful training. City College of San Francisco and North Seattle Community College:

- Placed more than 60% of their graduates;
- Reported that their graduates' hourly wages (San Francisco -- $6.58; Seattle -- $7.20) were higher than the 1990 project average and much higher than the minimum wage paid to entry-level child care workers in many communities;
- Reported that eight months following training, all of the trainees from Seattle who were initially placed were still employed in child care as were 73% of those trained in San Francisco; and
- Both colleges continued the training for a second year.

These two colleges exhibited the conditions for successful

expansion discussed earlier. In addition, a number of external and internal factors appear to have contributed to their special achievements. These include:

- Economic conditions -- Compared to other sites, Seattle and San Francisco had healthy economies in 1990. Seattle, in particular, was booming. The higher wages paid in these cities probably reflect economic conditions in which child care employers had to compete for workers with other industries for workers; the high placement rates may be due to the general availability of child care jobs.
- Transportation -- Pennsylvania and other sites in the Northeast have harsh winters and the semi-rural sites such as those near Orlando and in several of the Pennsylvania counties lack good public transportation. In contrast, Seattle and San Francisco are relatively compact, with good public transportation and climates where older workers generally did not find getting to work a problem.

Internal factors contributed to program success:

- Advantageous administrative location -- In San Francisco, the Parent Education Program ran the older adult training under the supervision of that program's director. Regular staff persons did the teaching. In Seattle, the Child and Family Education Department offered the training with the chairperson playing a major role and department faculty hired to teach during the summer. In both cases, those running the program had immediate access to support staff and clerical help. In contrast, several other less successful sites subcontracted the training or hired a part-time faculty member to run the program. Although the quality of the training appears to have been adequate in all systems, Seattle and San Francisco were better poised for follow-up efforts for the second year. The involvement of the program director and chairperson also provided continuity and leadership when the programs sought second-year funding.

- Course timing -- Both Seattle and San Francisco completed their training just before the start of the school year, when many child care facilities, including Head Start, hire new workers. Sites which finished later in the fall had more difficulty in placing their graduates. Timing a training course to end several weeks before employers are to do major hiring seems to be one key to high placement rates.
- Community linkages -- In San Francisco, the Parent Education Program linked for the first time with the Area Agency on Aging. The AAA contributed help with recruitment, screening, some training stipends, and job search training and assistance. In both sites, close work with practicum sites produced job offers for graduates.
- Publicity -- The older worker child care training program proved to be of great interest to the media. Television news shows in both Seattle and San Francisco aired segments on the training. The New York Times ran a story and picture on the San Francisco program. Media coverage helped in fund-raising: When San Francisco's second year was featured in the local newspaper, a local law firm contributed an unsolicited gift to help fund a third training cycle.

CONCLUSION

The experiences from twelve Generations Together-initiated community college older adult child care training programs demonstrate a number of factors that contribute to the success of such programs. The cases of several particularly outstanding colleges demonstrate additional success factors.

The factors contributing to the success of these programs can also be generalized to other community college program (or to older adult child care training in settings other than community colleges). These include a well-developed program model of which the actual training is only one part; an appropriate curriculum that meets both older learning needs and needs of the employers and their field; a practicum that contributes to older adult

learning, makes contact with possible employers, and serves as the focal point for discussions about on-the-job difficulties and their solutions; joint college/community agency leadership that is called upon to actively assist in the program; rigorous and systematic placement efforts by staff familiar with both older adult employment and the specific employers; and attention to the affective needs of the class members.

Particularly outstanding older adult training programs are also likely to be built on factors similar to those contributing to the success of the models in San Francisco and Seattle. Included among these will be external factors such as the economic situation and the ability of workers to get to jobs. Other factors will be related to strategic decisions such as the timing of the training to meet peak employer need, locating the training in an administrative center within the college that maximizes support, and a high level of community linkages and publicity that aid supplementary in funding.

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